

The HEARING OF Faith

LIVING STREAM MINISTRY RADIO NEWSLETTER

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"He therefore who bountifully supplies to you the Spirit . . . does He do it out of the works of the law or out of the hearing of faith?" Galatians 3:5

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Only that which comes out of Christ is in the church. Eve was not made from clay, but from Adam, the one who typified Christ. The preciousness is that God took a rib from Adam and made Eve. Only that which came out from Adam, not from clay, can be called "Eve," and only that which comes from Christ can be called the church.

The Collected Works of Watchman Nee, Set Two, Volume 34, p. 29

Dear Listeners,

September is a month of reflection. With the passing of summer and the coming of fall, most of us find the pace of our daily lives slowing a bit. We hope that you will pause to give us a call or drop us a quick note. Your comments and input are the most meaningful measure we have of how we are doing. Also, please mention the program to a friend. We pray continually for the Lord to reach more people with this encouraging and uplifting ministry. Our only aim is to glorify Christ and bring all His people into a deeper experience and enjoyment of Him for the building up of His Body.

Our daily listeners are absorbed in the riches that are unfolding in *Life-study of Exodus*, particularly as we continue to explore the tabernacle. The clearness and genuine light that we have received from this ministry on the tabernacle are truly astounding. We see the redeeming Christ in so many items of the tabernacle, and we are brought day by day into the very presence of God in the Holy of Holies. Judging from the comments of our listeners, you are being enlightened as we are by these outstanding messages. We look steadfastly to the Lord for His continued shining in the weeks ahead as we go even deeper into the tabernacle.

Finally, don't forget our free offer to all our listeners for *Reference Guide to the Tabernacle*. Those who have already received it have told us what a benefit it is to their understanding and enjoyment of this unique portion of Scripture. To get your free copy, simply call or write to us. Our toll-free number is 888-Life-Study, or 888-543-3788.

Living Stream Ministry Radio

WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

When we come to the matter of the church, we touch a marvelous subject in the Bible, one that is in the very depths of the heart of God. Many today speak of the church in a common way, referring to a physical building, an organization, or simply a gathering of the Lord's children. However, the church is higher, deeper, and more wonderful than this.

In Ephesians 3:9-10 the apostle Paul speaks of the mystery which was hidden in God throughout the ages and of the multifarious wisdom of God being made known "through the church." Verse 11 goes on to say, "According to the eternal purpose which He made in Christ Jesus our Lord." The church did not come into existence merely as an afterthought. In eternity past, before the foundation of the world, before the heavens, the earth, and all things were created, God purposed to have the church. The church is so dear, so lovable, and so precious to God because it is the desire of God's heart and the center of His eternal plan, which He purposed before time began.

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CHURCH

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There are many wonderful types or pictures of the church throughout the Bible. One of the most remarkable types is that of Eve in Genesis 2. To produce a counterpart for Adam, God took a rib from his side and built from it a woman, whom He presented to Adam. Ephesians 5:25-32 tells us that this picture is fulfilled in Christ and the church. Just as Eve was formed from a part of Adam, the church as the bride of Christ is built with something of Christ Himself, that is, with His very life and nature. As such, it is not only His counterpart but His enlargement and increase.

Ephesians 1:22-23 reveals that the church is also the Body of Christ, the fullness of the One who fills all in all. The Body is not an organization but an organism constituted of all the regenerated believers for the expression and activities of the Head, Christ.

The church is also the house of God, typified most vividly by the tabernacle and the temple in the Old Testament. All the detailed items of the tabernacle and temple signify the many aspects of Christ for our experience. God is embodied in Christ, Christ is known in the Spirit, and the Spirit is joined to our human spirit to produce the church as the dwelling place of God in spirit (1 Cor. 6:17; Eph. 2:21-22).

In the book of Ephesians, the church is also revealed as the corporate and universal new man germinated by Christ on the cross (2:15), the kingdom of God today as the citizenry of the saints (v. 19a), the household of God (v. 19b), and the corporate warrior fighting the spiritual warfare for God (6:11-18). In Revelation we see the universal church realized and practiced in the local churches as the golden lampstands. These golden lampstands are the testimony of Jesus today, which will consummate in the New Jerusalem as the goal of God's eternal economy in eternity future (1:11-12, 20; 21:2).

It is no wonder that Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her (Eph. 5:25). May we all have a spirit of wisdom and revelation to see what the church is, and may we love the church as Christ does.

For further reading on this subject, please see

Life-study of Ephesians, msg. 1 and Basic Principles for the Practice of the Church Life, published by Living Stream Ministry.

Highlights

FROM THE LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

If we would understand any book of the Bible, or any chapter, either in the Old Testament or in the New, we need to know the underlying thought of that book or chapter. We need to know what concept is beneath the surface. In particular, we need to know the underlying thought connecting Exodus 27 and 28. Why does the divine record speak of the priesthood immediately after the description of the tabernacle? It is rather difficult to find the reason. I have never read a book which tells us why, after the record concerning the tabernacle ending in chapter twenty-seven, we have a long section concerning the priesthood. Therefore, we need to find out why, in the sequence of the record in Exodus, the priesthood follows the tabernacle.

THE TABERNACLE AND THE PRIESTHOOD

The last two verses of chapter twenty-seven speak of the lighting of the lamps in the tabernacle. These verses give us the reason that these two sections of Exodus are put together. Here is the reason: we cannot have the tabernacle without the priesthood, and neither can we have the priesthood without the tabernacle. The last two verses of chapter twenty-seven indicate that immediately after the tabernacle came into existence, there was the need of the priesthood for the lighting of the lamps. This indicates that, spiritually speaking, the priesthood and the tabernacle are one entity. In the typology of these chapters, God reveals that His redeemed people are both the tabernacle and the priesthood.

The tabernacle is a dwelling place. But how can such a dwelling place be a living people? With the fulfillment of these types in the New Testament, the tabernacle and the priesthood are put together. First Peter 2:5 says that we are built up into a spiritual house, a holy priesthood. In this verse, according to the grammar, the spiritual house and the holy priesthood are in apposition. This means that these terms refer to the same thing. Therefore, the spiritual house is the holy priesthood.

In English the word priesthood refers to two things. First, it denotes a body of priests, a group of priests who work and serve together. Second, the word priesthood denotes the priestly service, the work or ministry done by the priests. Many readers of the Bible emphasize the second meaning of this word. Whenever you read 1 Peter 2:5 in the past, what did you understand by the word priesthood used in this verse? The Greek language has two different words to denote the priesthood as a body of priests and the priesthood as a priestly service.

In 1 Peter 2:5 the priesthood is not the service of the priests; rather, it is a group of priests who live, serve, and work together. The priesthood here is not a service; it is a body of priests built together to live and serve as one entity. This priesthood is the spiritual house. Hence, the body of priests is also a house. In like manner, the saints who are built together are a spiritual house. This spiritual house is a collective people. My point here is that the house and the priesthood are one entity.

The church today is first the house of God. We the believers are being built together into a spiritual house. This spiritual house is a serving body, a serving unit, a serving people. The biblical term for this unit is the priesthood.

“In the typology of these chapters, God reveals that His redeemed people are both the tabernacle and the priesthood.”

Life-study of Exodus, msg. 116, pp. 1325-1326